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1 message

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FRG votes to require sprinklers

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FOX RIVER GROVE – More than 20 firefighters applauded the Village Board after it voted to require all new commercial construction to include sprinkler systems.

With the move, Fox River Grove joins Crystal Lake, Algonquin and other area towns that require commercial structures to have the fire-suppression devices.

The ordinance does not include apartment buildings, but does apply to mixed-use structures, said Art Osten, village administrator.

It requires owners of existing buildings to install sprinklers only when they renovate more than 50 percent of their business.

This will be calculated by square feet, Osten said.

Previously, only commercial buildings at or more than 1,200 square feet required sprinklers.

Members from fire departments in Fox River Grove and Barrington approached the village of Fox River Grove about three months ago with a proposal to change the sprinkler regulations.

"The biggest reason was life safety," Fox River Grove Deputy Fire Chief Jim Kreher said.

"When there are no sprinklers, the fire can spread pretty quickly and the heat and the smoke fill the area quickly," he said.

"The sprinkler system, if it doesn't put the fire out, holds the fire at bay so people can get out safely and not be overcome by smoke inhalation," said Kreher, a 33-year firefighting veteran.

Sprinklers increasingly are important to firefighter safety as modern construction relies on lightweight materials in walls and floors that can fail more quickly than traditional construction materials, Kreher added.

The requirement to add sprinkler systems could have a silver lining for property owners. Having sprinkler systems installed can lower insurance rates.

"Most of the time, it can save between 5 [percent] and 20 percent by

having sprinklers in their buildings," Kreher said.

Both Fox River Grove Fire Department Chaplain Gerald Schalk and a representative from the Huntley Fire Protection District thanked the Village Board after its vote Jan. 20.

The village had taken a step to ensure the safety of its firefighters, the men said.

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